



TÉCNICO LISBOA



UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA
DE CATALUNYA



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FOLLOW

PROMOTION AND FOLLOW-UP OF GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN EUROPEAN HEIS

WP2. THE LISBON CONFERENCE

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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OEIST
OBSERVATÓRIO
DE EMPREGABILIDADE
OIST
FEV 2010, 1.ª EDIÇÃO

GT2

Comissão Sectorial
para a Educação e
Formação (CS15)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE LISBON CONFERENCE: CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION	4
THE CONFERENCE INPUT	5
CORE THEMES	6
1ST DAY PANELS – PRESENTATIONS & DEBATE:	8
Research Developments.....	8
The Role of the publicly owned and non-corporate institutions	12
Managing Employability at HEI	16
Through the eyes of the employers	21
2ND DAY PANELS: ROUND TABLES.....	25
1st Topic – Managing employability at HEI	25
2 nd TOPIC – Through the Eyes of the employers – “Soft skills / Recruitment / Training / Internationalization”	31
3rd Topic – The role of the publicly owned and non-corporate institutions.....	36
MANAGEMENT & STRATEGIES PRACTICES IN PROMOTING & MONITORING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY	40
Final considerations and future debates	49



THE LISBON CONFERENCE

**Conclusions, Results and
Future Opportunities**

INTRODUCTION

The concept of employability has given rise to gripping debates over the last decades, in particular when Europe is facing major challenges, with daunting cuts and amid a serious social and economic crisis. The context of the tertiary graduates takes on particular relevance, especially looking at the European perspective of unifying higher education and labour markets. Accountability to society, the economic and social value involved in the production of a tertiary graduate hinges, to a large extent, upon the ability to ensure that the students, following completion of their basic education, have the right skills to enter the labour market and preferably in their fields of expertise. This momentum, initially thought from the university perspective, was based upon the need to involve broad sections of society and therefore ensure inclusiveness of the FOLLOW project.

The organization of a space for presenting and debating ideas associated with employability has always been one of the pillars of the FOLLOW project and a working group was set up exclusively for that purpose. The issue of employability is an important and differentiating factor to the FOLLOW project. Without neglecting the importance of the theoretical debate, which has been sufficiently thorough, it is now critical to focus on the empirical method and promote direct contact and action with the measures that have been implemented and with its outcomes and realities. The Work Package P1 (WP1) has been carried out in this regard, in particular an in-depth study of the reality and the objective measures of four reference Universities at European level with the CLUSTER network, which includes 12 leading S&T universities. It is known that there are some methodological constraints and that the deficiencies of a reduced universe of universities are evident but the outcomes and similarities suggest the future extension to other institutions (FOLLOW 2) will show that these similarities are still present in a broader universe. This is our major goal, i.e., to make the work better and more comprehensive, which is just at an early stage and must be long-lasting and resilient.



Figure 1 - Banner of the 1st International Conference on Graduate Employability

The 1st International Conference on Graduate Employability held in Lisbon on 11 and 12 October 2012 under the FOLLOW project was attended by speakers from different sectors of society, with different perspectives (even within each sector) and raised different questions and proposed lines of action. The first goal was achieved even before the event was held: the multi-sectoral, multidisciplinary and multi-ideological approach that is critical to visualize the phenomenon of employability in its different components and implications. These approaches were structured and organized through the definition of 3 large thematic groups that allow the main stakeholders to include the issue of employability (University, Labor Market, State):

- Managing Employability at Higher Education Institutions
- Through the eyes of the employers
- The role of the publicly-owned and non-corporate institutions

These 3 large groups cannot be dealt with separately and it is crucial to retain the idea that what is thought and discussed in one group always has a relation to and influences all other groups.

Managing employability at Higher Education Institutions (Discussion Group A)

Employability plays a key role in the strategic management of the HEIs. Recently these institutions have shown growing concerns with the structures that deal with the labour market, in tandem with the main activities involved in higher education: teaching, R&D and technology transfer and knowledge dissemination.

Universities are concerned not only with their students but also with the professional environment they will face. Nowadays, this situation is reflected by the fact that one of the key indicators in accreditation processes of higher education is the employability of their levels of study.

Through the eyes of the employers (Discussion Group B)

We can observe the link between Higher Education Institutions and the working life as being a circuit where HEIs are the starting line and the working life the finish line. The investment that students make over a period of their lives will eventually culminate in a professional career. Employers are seen as an absorbing side, as the ones with the key responsibility in terms of employment and employability. But, how do employers manage this responsibility and how do they balance it with their actual needs and capacities of employing HE graduates? In the present context of economic and social uncertainty where unemployment is rising, how companies relate to the most qualified workers that leave the HEIs?

The role of publicly-owned and non-corporate institutions (Discussion Group C)

It is incumbent on the state and public-owned to develop and improve the setting where the different institutions and actions that relate to graduate employability interact. The role of the State is a key variable when analyzing employability issues considering not only its role as policy maker and enforcer but also as an employer.

The state needs to find the best balance between its multiple roles while assuring that the universities keep on providing the country and its citizens with a public service.

THE CONFERENCE INPUT

The different perspectives and views, with greater or lesser technical or methodological support or greater or lesser empirical support, result from the experience that the stakeholders have in carrying out their responsibilities and allows us to analyze the points raised. Ultimately, this stock-taking exercise can be considered as a large scale survey addressed to experts in the different aspects of the phenomenon, not only in terms of employability, but also in related areas like Innovation, the regulatory role of the State in the economy and in the design of public policies for

promoting employability, the paradigms of business recruitment, among others. The experts' positions, roles and responsibilities are reflected into a set of extremely sound and relevant opinions for those who aim ultimately at improving and enhancing graduate employability and allows us to systematize a number of ideas not only to take action but also to guide future research.

The content analysis allows us to find points of convergence and divergence between the different stakeholders and to identify the critical areas, which may be encouraged to facilitate partnerships and real improvement measures among the stakeholders and also to identify areas that may hinder those partnerships. It is also incumbent on the FOLLOW Project and its partners, based on their experience and skills, to critically analyze the conference contributions, focusing not only on what was said but also on what was left unsaid. The level of commitment shown by the participants reveals that graduate employability is a relevant aspect.

It must be borne in mind that this section of the report results from a series of contributions and visions, not only with theoretical and empirical support, but also resulting from the pure debate and discussion in round tables and question-and-answer sessions with the audience. The objective was to resort to the wisdom and the knowledge of key figures involved in graduate employability rather than developing theories and methodologies. As previously mentioned, this document compiles a series of concerns and thoughts that, considering their origin, are extremely pertinent and valuable for future actions of nearly 40 speakers, and that in view of the momentum allows for systematizing a number of concerns that are in line with objectives of the European Commission for young people until 2020.

Finally, it should be noted that, in addition to the diversity of speakers' roles and responsibilities, many of them in key positions, i.e. CEOs of large companies (Banking Sector, ICTs, Energy, Consulting, Pharmaceuticals, etc.), Secretaries of State in office (Higher Education and Employment), former Ministers (Social Security or Higher Education), Presidents of Professional Orders, Presidents or Leaders of Public Administration Structures with competences in regulating or promoting employability and university experts with scientific merit in these areas.

CORE THEMES

With no expectations at the beginning and with a neutral position in relation to what would be discussed, it was possible to anticipate what would be the conference subject matter. Different views and converging and diverging opinions were presented but it is possible to identify a pattern in the number of concerns that cut across the different stakeholders. The search for balances between pedagogical demand and supply of the labour markets cannot rely exclusively on the employers and universities. There was a general recognition during the conference that the fact the world is living deep social and economic imbalances entails that the designed solutions be based on short-term factors and not on long-term factors.

Finally, western societies may enter a spiral of constant patching without ever firstly reaching the desired balance and, secondly, a situation that allows for effective and efficient defense in view of any new periods of economic and social unrest. In short, 5 core themes can be highlighted and their respective discussion sub-dimensions:

Figure 2 - Summary of the Major Themes Addressed per discussion sub-dimensions

Themes	Discussion sub-dimensions
Softskills vs. Hardskills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to ensure that the programmes provide the skills required by the employers? Who is responsible for endorsing extra-curricular skills?
Current Situation (Influence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence of public policies vs. social utility in view of public resource management Internationalization of graduates Innovation/technology – competitive markets (differences between means of production and means of design)
Structural Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic and economic change lead to the growth of the so-called social areas The impact of the crisis is momentary and has major impacts on the employability of new graduates? Lack of technicians with middle higher education
Social value of higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difference between a young graduate unemployed vs. non-graduate (what gap?) Bologna Process – has insertion accelerated? What are the impacts?
Pedagogical and scientific autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce vacancies without closing scientific programmes with lesser employability, usually associated with artistic and cultural fields Imposition of knowledge to the laws of the market or the other way round?
Promotion of employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of PhD holders in companies Lifelong learning: who should promote? How to adequate it? Responsibility for employment/unemployment: universities, state or businesses? SPIN-OFFS: shared social responsibility (should large companies promote spin-offs or just the universities or the State?) University role to create jobs Role of professional associations: formal representation in the structures that define curricula and programme accreditation? Believing for the job or preparing for the job?
Employability: Concepts and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of common statistics/methodologies – public information (what and how – controlled by whom?) Conceptualization of employability: a reductionist or a broad concept?

The table below generally provides the stakeholders' concerns.

Figure 3 - Summary of the Major Themes Addressed per Stakeholder

Discussion Groups	Softskills Vs. Hardskills	Current Situation	Structural Situation	Social Value of Higher Education	Pedagogical and Scientific Autonomy	Promotion of Employability	Employability: Concepts and Monitoring
A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
B	X	X	X			X	
C		X	X			X	X

The first perception we get is the confirmation of the complexity of the social phenomena in debate. The branches and associations are multiple and, consequently, the implications and actions can start chain reactions in such complex structure with implications in all stakeholders. One can easily understand some divergences and the dimension of the task of combining the needs of employers, public institutions and universities in a satisfactory manner to everyone. For instance the debate whether the main focus in terms of employability responsibility should lie more on the universities, by preparing graduates in a more adequate manner, or on the employers, by creating jobs. In spite of this debate there is unanimity in considering that there is an urgent need to converge universities and labor market and the public institutions should have an important role in this.

1ST DAY PANELS – PRESENTATIONS & DEBATE:

Research Developments



Given the different variables associated with the employability phenomena and higher education graduates employability in particular, each theoretical development must begin by the concrete and objective definition of its analysis field. When addressing employability is important to know what indeed one is talking about and what are you trying to address what using the employability concept. It is noticeable that there is a general agreement on how important this variable is in the debates concerning labor market and the role and connections of universities in those markets but one also verifies that the concept is used to address different issues.

To address employability performance of a Higher Education Institution is a different thing than to address employability that a graduate has. A deep reflection is needed in order to define this issue and it is something that needs to be present when one starts to address employability issues. A wide definition of Employability tells us that it consists in the ability of an individual to obtain, maintain and perform its job, being this the official definition adopted by the European Structure of the Bologna Process Follow Up¹. According to its employability capacity, an individual will have more or less competitiveness in the approach to the labor market. On the other hand, the employability concept is often used to make reference of how many individuals are employed facing the total of individuals, a employability rate. A concept proposed by Professor Mariana Gaio Alves, which may help dealing with conceptualization confusion is the one of "Transitions", a process that takes up to a certain period and it refers to going from the academic context into the labor market context.

An issue which may be at the starting point of a debate concerning theoretical development is precisely the relevance of this subject and why is it present and high profiled in the political agendas and both European and local strategies. The subject of employability, in general, and graduate employability, in particular, has been subjected to various studies and it's a high profiled field of study within academic means, but the relevance and role that it's been having in the definition of policies and in a central position in the European debate it is something that has been gaining position in the last 10 to 5 years and such phenomena is partly explained by the problems that have been resulting from the labor market imbalance whose impact e social pressure demands more effective measures under the risk of making worse the social and economic problems assaulting Europe nowadays. Professor Walter Van Trier presented 5 developments which might explain the actual conjuncture:

- Massification of higher education, leading to a decline of the 'differentiating power' of educational levels
- Task-based technological advance, resulting in relative decline of both manual and cognitive routine jobs
- Transitional labor markets with an emphasis on mobility, flexibility and de-standardization
- Internationalization and Globalization
- Knowledge economy or the increasing emphasis on education and training as an important factor in economic growth

Summing up, these developments and general problematic can be enunciated by the following "*The transition from higher education to employment is viewed as a phenomenon that deserves attention, for graduation from a higher education institution is no longer a guarantee of a prestigious position and demanding job tasks. (...) It is obvious that transition from higher education to employment has become a complex process that requires substantial time and effort and often stretches over a long period.*"² (U. Teichler)

The proper conceptualization of this issue is a good and needed starting point to any work within this subject. In the scope of the FOLLOW project and during the 1st International Conference on Graduate Employability the concept of employability presented itself as an ambiguous concept and used with different intents. Concerning the needs of the FOLLOW project, it was not felt a need to limit the concept to something too restrict or strongly limited. During WP1 it was possible to identify different structures with different concerns employability wise, either at developing and perfecting

¹ <http://www.ehea.info/>

² *Higher Education in Europe*, vol.23, 1998, n°4

professional paths monitoring techniques or either at promoting and offering professional internships that facilitate professional insertion or even promoting workshops to provide training for graduates and students to attain employability skills (In the sense of having the ability to obtain, keep and perform a job). It is possible to identify a convergence and union between the different approaches that build the concept of employability and that can coexist in a wider concept as long as we maintain an understanding of what we are addressing in a certain context.



In the scope of the Bologna Process Follow Up Group and according to employability conceptualizing already mentioned, Professor Walter Van Trier suggested 3 action areas where Higher Education Institutions can make important and relevant impact:

- **Preparation for employment** - Capacity of Education and Training Systems to equip young people with key competences and necessary motivation and understanding of the labor market
- **Transition from education to employment** - Capacity of Education and Training Systems to (create) link(age)s to employers and the world of work
- **Stay in employment and progress in career** - Capacity of Education and Training Systems to update and upgrade the knowledge and skills of workers

In terms of concrete actions performed at a European level, a benchmarking study solicited by the EU was made by the Center for Research on Lifelong Learning³ (CRELL). On the following chart, a comparative insight about the performance, in terms of employability, by each teaching level, gives some insight about the major differences in EU Countries:

³ <http://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

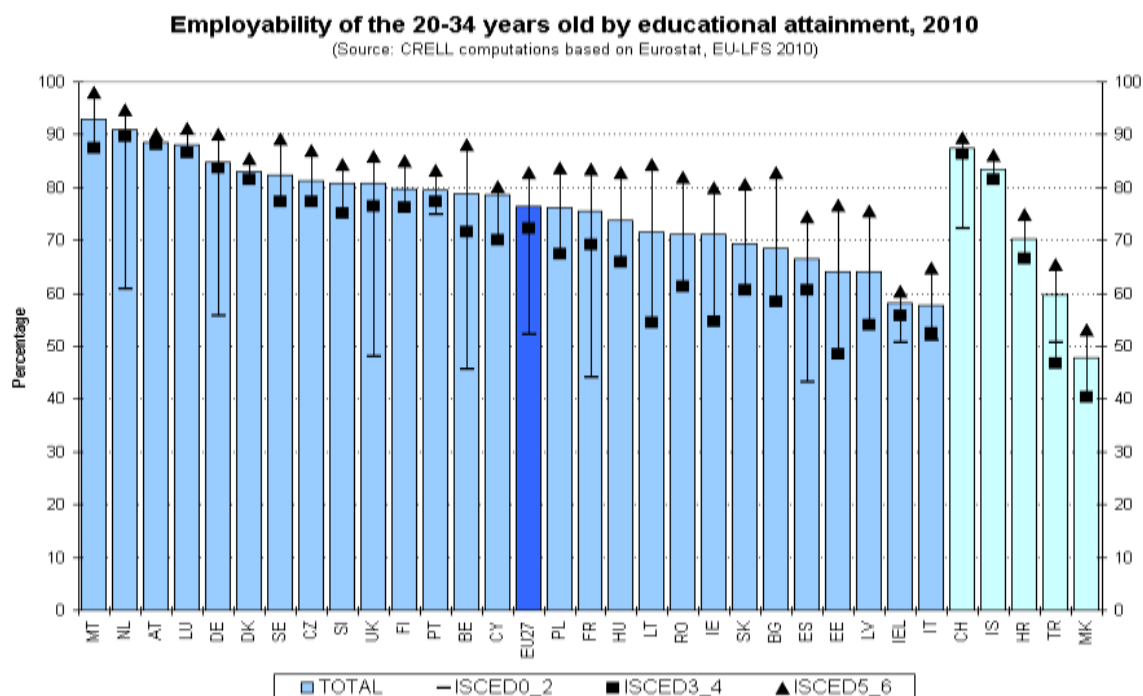


Figure 4 - Employability of the 20-34 years old by educational attainment, 2010, CRELL– EU-LFS

These figures are supplied by the EU Labor Force Survey, the only source for comparative data on these matters that the EU has available. The choice for a survey was due to the fact that the professional insertion is evolving in terms of its complexity and a simpler approach capable of producing comparative and equivalent data was needed. This survey resorts to the young employment rate within the same birth cohort up to 3 years after the conclusion of their graduation.

The one-dimensional usage of employability rates allow a “photograph” of the visible side of the structure, which according to the main mindset present at the conference, is not enough to guide strategies and policies. It is possible to broaden the work developed in this benchmarking to issues such as gender, ethnicity, scientific area, etc. The concept of “Being Employed” can be broaden and include variables such as “way of obtaining job”, “Time to obtain first job”, variables that can be linked to the concept of “Transitions” mentioned earlier. It is possible to add value with these variables; however it is necessary to keep in mind that the availability at a European level of comparative data contemplating them is scarce.

The process of collection and analysis of data must contemplate information needed to perform a conjuncture and structural analysis of what is influencing the trends and future developments.

There was still one final note to approach one of the more talked about issues throughout the conference, the convergence between the needs of the labor market and the skills provided by Universities. This issue was present in this panel by raising the question if the capacities and skills acquired are enough to match the capacities and skills demanded for the proper, effective and

efficient performance of a job. These needed skills were summed up in the following by Professor Walter Van Trier:

- **Professional expertise** - Knowledge, skills and analytical thinking
- **Functional flexibility** - Ability to deal with changes in a positive way
- **Innovation and Knowledge Management** - Innovative capacity and ability to implement ideas
- **Mobilization of Human Resources** - Mobilize their own competences and those of others
- **International Orientation** - Other languages, but also ability to deal with other cultures

The Role of the publicly owned and non-corporate institutions



The presence and voice of the Portuguese Government was made present through the Secretary of State of Employment, Dr. Pedro Silva Martins and through the Secretary of State of Higher Education, Dr. João Queiró. These are precisely the two State Secretaries which reflect the 2 main stakeholders in the graduate employability issue. The goal was to have the insight of the public structures and the State. Due to the fact that this conference was organized in Portugal there is an expected focus on the Portuguese reality also because the logistics of having public representatives from other countries were complicated.

The interventions focused on presenting some aspects that have been prioritized in terms of employment policies, transverse to several aspects of the labor market but with an important focus on the theme of higher education graduations.



To set up the context, it was made an alert in the sense of *"giving and additional focus to public policies, namely in the area of employment and realize if those same policies may or may not improve the conditions in which young, adults and the entire population may access in order to make, e.g., the transition between the dimension education and the dimension Labor Market"* (Pedro Silva Martins). In spite of the difficult conjuncture, there is the public recognition that the Portuguese labor market is unbalanced due to structural dissonances making it essential the task of developing a set of structural reforms that allow to rethink its functioning and follow a path of development and growth that allow Portugal to face with better resources the complicated social and economic conjuncture. This reflection is important at a wider scale, because it points out the need of a reflexive and critical action over one's own internal structures. It's in this sense that international comparing demonstrates that Portugal is a *"case of extreme protection of jobs already created. Obviously it is a valuable goal that was must point out, but it also need to be taken into consideration the possible negative effects that that valuable goal can have on the creation of jobs to young graduates who are seeking entrance into the labor market. It is needed to establish a balance between, protecting existent jobs and to create necessary conditions so that there are absolutely no inhibitions, from a corporate perspective, for the creation of new jobs which will be occupied in a significant and large percentage by the young. This is an issue raised when there are discussions concerning Portugal and when comparisons are made between Portugal and other countries, there are issues raised such as segmentation of the labor market or even precariousness. Recent data shows that 9 out of 10 job contracts in Portugal are fixed term contracts, obviously this statistic reflects, to a certain extent, the fact that the Portuguese economy is living a period of stagnation over the last few years which does not create a context favorable for the employers to embark on the adventure of creating job contracts for longer periods or without term, however it's important to keep in mind that the labor legislation such as the Portuguese one up until now was*

not the most appropriate to create such a favorable context. It is this shift of paradigm and the Portuguese government is seeking with the reform of the labor legislation which took place this year. A set of adjustments were made in sensible issues such as individual dismissal, but I feel that it will be very important to build the confidence of the employers specially from the time that the economic conjuncture is more favorable to a new form of hiring based on stable and permanent contracts and not in ways associated with precariousness, unstable contracts or even informal work. It is a change of paradigm that we are looking for to promote, it's an important reform developed within a context of an agreement and I feel it is a very important step in the structural change of the labor market in Portugal and it will have important impact in terms of setting conditions to create long lasting job for young workers and consequently for young and recent graduates." (Pedro Silva Martins)

Following the issues of correcting restrictions and structural obstacles to the profession insertion of higher education graduates, the issue of the role of professional orders was also raised. It is necessary to rethink, in collaboration with the Government, the appropriate restrictions to access some professions in the sense of protecting the interests of the individuals who use the services and products supplied and produced by those professions. However those restrictions must be thought in a way that allows eliminating barriers that are actually affecting the access to those professions and that way to create conditions to reinforce employability levels in those areas.

The professional orders also have a significant role regulating the labor market by alerting and acting on what can be considered a lack of focus in terms of the excessive variety of formative offer. The head of the Portuguese Order of Engineers, Engineer Matias Ramos, pointed out what he considers an excess of "sub-engineering" and consequently an excess of formative offer that the labor market does not need.

In another sense, one more oriented to direct action over the labor market, some objective measures were mentioned, namely financed by EU funds, which allow companies to hire unemployed individuals. In this domain it was mentioned the strategic program "Impulso Jovem" (Young Impulse)⁴ which consists in a large set of internships in the context of the reconversion of the Portuguese economy that is undergoing.

It is also important to have the perspective of the State Secretary for Higher Education from which there is the recognition that employability as a standing out variable in the strategic orientations for the government policies for Higher Education makes their action quite complex. In 2012, some guidelines were adopted in order to consider the levels of graduate placement in the labor market a relevant variable for courses to continue to exist and also for the possibility to increase the number of vacancies in each course. What is present in this action is a concern with the deficit between the formative offer and the needs in terms of qualified human resources and what kind of implications this can have in terms of developing the labor market and consequently the economic growth of the country. A government intervention at this level raises serious questions as for the radius of action of its regulating capacity: What will be the real efficiency of these actions and also raises issues on the debate on how far can an economist and market focus prevail over the knowledge society of production, maintenance and development of scientific knowledge.

⁴ <http://www.impulsojovempportugal.pt/>



The intervention of the State Secretary, Dr. João Queiró contemplated some of these issues, by placing the matter in the following way: *"The role of the government in these matters is highly complex and is linked to the high complexity of Universities and their mission, these issues don't have a simple answer and there are a lot of variables at stake. It is possible to conceive multiple approaches depending of multiple subjects, e.g. Area of study, level of study, state of the economy of a country (Conjectural or Structural). All these are aspects that influence the approach to the question and all of us can think easily in examples that illustrate this: Study field and study level; we cannot address a bachelor degree oriented for commerce the same way we address a master degree in classic Greek literature. We are not talking about the same problem therefore we cannot address the issue in the same manner. As for the state of the economy or in a broader sense, the state of development of the country (...) the issue of the mission of schools and universities is not completely autonomous of the that state of development"*

The interventions in the first section of this panel are relevant to point out some general premises, namely the one that the convergence e connection between universities and companies in order to potentiate employability rates, needs to consider a complex combination of institutional and context variables. There were also contributions in the sense of presenting strategies or objective strategic concerns. The need national economies have for competitiveness is unanimously seen as an essential factor for a balanced labor market and plain job situations and concerns and actions should be done in order to achieve such competitiveness. According to Dr. Jorge Portugal, representative of the House of the Presidency of the Portuguese Republic: *"We can only be competitive if we have the ability to produce innovative products which can compete with the finest products global market wise. Therefore we are talking about an innovative economy, based obviously in qualified human resources and an open economy, which goes beyond products coming in and out of our national market. We are addressing the issues of competences and talent and we*

are and what we are experiencing today is an arbitrary process between the more frail European economies (the southern ones) and the stronger northern economies that have the capacity to attract the more qualified human resources and more talented precisely to feed their companies and their structure of innovation and productivity. Let's then address the economies based on knowledge, the main question is how can we innovate more and better. The raw materials needed for this are talent, competences and human resources, therefore, universities, in this battle for innovation, for the increase of productivity, have a crucial role in rethinking and discussing the offer for human resources, not only at graduation level but also at higher educational levels such as PhD"

A society based on innovation is a competitive society with need for highly qualified human resources. It is a desirable scenario in the creation of a balanced labor market with the capacity to absorb higher education graduates. It is also a stage where there is space for the scientific knowledge can seek applicability and help to innovate; where the debate about the limitations on pedagogic and scientific autonomy, which can strangle the society of knowledge, makes no sense because that autonomy is a crucial condition for innovation and consequently competitiveness and economic growth.

Managing Employability at HEI



The insight of the ones who manage Higher Education Institutions and the presentation of already implemented strategies echoes the work developed in the FOLLOW WP1, but the approach on this panel was less focused on the practice itself and more on general strategic concerns at management level. It was with this focus that the general traits of the employability strategies of the management board of the Universidade Polit cnica de Catalunya (UPC) were presented by Vice-Rector Elisa Sayrol-Clos. It is important to point out once more that there was a concern, not only for debate, but also to present already adopted strategies and action courses which may stimulate and influence similar actions in other institutions.

It can be identified the strategic concern of maintain strong and structured connections to the different social and economic sectors, allowing so to guarantee measures for innovations and

economic growth, important condition to generate investment and consequently, new jobs. It is a concern with the long term strengthening of a network and structure which fosters total convergence between the main stakeholders involved in Higher education graduates.

UPC maintains, at the present time, connection to over 2680 companies, partnerships which are indeed a key factor for the economic and social progress of Spain and to lay the foundations for innovative, sustainable and responsible actions. Collaborations with companies focus on:

- Seeking new technological solutions
- To improve professional development
- To facilitate talent on the productive sector

UPC is also involved in national structures of promotion and improvement of employability conditions, namely CRUE ⁵ - Council for Deans of Spanish Universities – An organization with 75 public and private universities which has a mission to accelerate the convergence between higher education and research at an European level as well as the strengthening of the relations between university, public administration, productive sector and overall society. The mission is to coordinate proposals concerning students, scholarships, jobs, services, training, counseling, organization and participation of students in European initiatives. CRUE is structured in the following work groups:

- Internships
- career guidance and professional competences
- self-occupation
- occupational observatory
- mobility and occupation



UPC is also part of the Agency for the Quality of the Catalunya University System (AQU Catalunya)⁶, an entity which has the mission to guarantee the quality of the higher education satisfying every European standard of quality considering the interest of society in quality higher education. From the activities developed in this agency, the following stand out:

- Accompanying the transition of graduates to the labor market
- Higher Education graduates satisfaction with the obtained degree surveys

In 2000, the agency and 7 public universities agreed in the creation of a transversal process of evaluation of the professional insertion of graduates.

Internally, the strategic development of UPC concerning their graduate employability is oriented in the following axis:

- Interventions in schools, targeting students:
 - Internships for students (bachelor and master level).
 - Educational cooperation agreements.
 - Job lists in schools to incorporate job offers for students (educational cooperation agreements).
 - Business Forums organized by the students of the schools of the UPC (9-10 issues per year).
 - Exchanges through international mobility programs and cooperation
 - Support other initiatives of students: BEST student association (Business Case), IAESTE, etc.
- Actions developed by the Research Valorization Unit of UPC:
 - Fostering entrepreneurship in the university community, researchers, students, professors, graduates, helping to increase their innovative potential to lead to the creation of new businesses.
 - Support entrepreneurship through compulsory courses aimed at promoting the entrepreneurial spirit and skills
- Contributions from the PhD Program:
 - Fostering collaboration with companies to implement university research.
 - Training of competencies and skills related to management environments (through the Doctoral forums).
 - Support in the creation of companies through the Research Valorization Unit.
- Actions developed by UPC Alumni:
 - Career Services
 - Job Offers
 - Networking activities
 - Collaboration with Professional organizations
 - Promote Continuous Education

In general terms, the strategic plan of UPC for employability issues demonstrate the variety of themes and options that need to be addressed when the variable employability is given a stand out position in the management and coordination of a higher education institution

A different approach was present on the second intervention on this panel. Professor Sampaio da Nóvoa, focused less in objective measures and more on a critical reflection about how the employability theme relates to managing higher education institutions. He made some

6 <http://www.aqu.cat>

considerations about how the employability issue must be brought into the context of debate and management inside the university space. The first issue was in the sense of criticizing the reductive way in which the concept of employability has been used, a lot of times inside the universities themselves. It is necessary to be well aware the foundations of higher education, which are well defined within the great universities of the world. Universities should not have the main concern of responding to the immediate present nor should their posture be defined by short and midterm results, but in the long term impact they have in the development of society.

The position of Professor Sampaio da Nóvoa was in the sense of sharing ideological orientation and critiques to what are factors of reducing the importance of the real mission and essence of universities. The finger was pointed to a shift of paradigm in which the lack of employment problem main focus is placed on the jobseeker: *"Are you unemployed? It is because you could not develop your capacities"*. He raised the issue that this focus might be a defense mechanism used to differentiate social strata since the access to knowledge, now a more broad and massified, is no longer a trait that distinguishes more privileged social strata. The ability to possess certain kinds of capital (social, economic, cultural, etc.) and its combination is essential to define one's position in social structure and in the actual context the ability to obtain knowledge and cultural capital is more widespread, being the differences between social strata laying in other structural factors.



Given this context, the university needs to know exactly what is its mission and there are 2 essential axis that must be present in the reflection universities need to make about themselves concerning what is university and university training:

- Knowing the students – Before, during and after the course. This knowledge should be integrated in the reflection about higher education. It should be mentioned that, in terms of the FOLLOW project consortium, internal and external structures of accompanying the professional paths, with different levels of detail and coverage, were identified; demonstrating and reinforcing the idea that universities are focused on gaining this knowledge about what happens after graduation.
- Institutional Perspective – It is important to link what is inside to what is outside. Universities should have the capacity to anticipate and participate in the evolution of the professions and society so that they can respond from within in every possible front. The university must know how to respond to new social evolutions.

The debate about employability should not influence the actions of university and make it stray from its mission. Professor Sampaio da Nóvoa stated that:

"... it is in this perspective that the debate on employability should influence our actions e not to subordinate ourselves to the needs of the market (...) we should place our knowledge and graduates at the service of the new models of economical organization. It is this capacity of adapting that shows the best in universities"

On a final note, a story was told that exemplifies some of the mentioned concerns. His 10 year old grandson stated, speaking about universities: *"I don't care what course I take as long as it gives me a good job"*. In conclusion, he stated that a public debate which sets this mindset into a child cannot be a debate focusing on the right issues and aspects.

Summing up, the main idea is that the university should not adapt to what exists, but it's there to create what's to come. There should not be yielding to a utilitarian mindset, the reflection of about employability in a broad sense is decisive but it should not be turned into a weapon against the capacity of universal knowledge that universities have nor against the capacity to give students the ability to do something for themselves and for the ones around them.

Through the eyes of the employers



The perspectives presented in this panel were highly focused on the current labor market structure and the existing needs in terms of human resources and how this translates into objective conditions of labor market access for graduates as well as the level of self-preparation and how far are they willing to go to grab their opportunities. One concept pointed out in the intervention of HP Portugal CEO, Dr. Manuel Lopes da Costa, was “Meritocracy” meaning that good professionals will always have competitive capacity to make a name for them in the labor market:

“... but what are you afraid of? This is our future, there is always place for the good ... the ones who which are in this school (IST) and other relevant engineering schools will always have place. When I recruit, obviously I have specific criteria and recruit the ones I consider to be the best...”

“There must be a meritocracy (and a lot of times there is not), Portugal needs to get used to live with a labor force that is not afraid to be evaluated and that makes space for the best...”

In terms of opportunities in the labor market, the posture is that the labor market is no longer local but global. Relocation is now a reality and it must be present in the awareness of the ones seeking job. No matter how many local offers exist, they must get to know the differentiation in terms of offers at a global level and must be willing to search for the best offers and conditions global wise.



There is also need to show some concern with the actual conjuncture and structural situation. It is needed to be more innovative in order to correct unbalances which drive economies to the situations like the ones in the south European countries. Focusing on the Portuguese situation, it is needed to be innovative and assume once and for all strengths and weaknesses and to develop a plan focused on the strengths:

"... we have what we have and we need to improve it, so we must find activities that we can do in Portugal and sell them to other countries in more balanced situations...once and for all let's decide that this is a country for services and lets provide those services and create more jobs here ... why should those jobs be going to other countries? Let's create them here ... the people responsible for large companies in Portugal must assume the responsibility to maintain work posts in Portugal...if we let multinationals, given the difficulties of our economy, force us to fire people, we're in a tight spot, we'll end up looking at each other and say – we were so big and now we are so small ... what shame it's over"

This reinforcing and growth at an internal level will translate into best job opportunities and will allow for graduates to choose either between the local or global market. The search for best opportunities are not an exclusive factor when searching a job and to stay at your own area/country should be a possible option: *"... people can choose, either they make more money abroad or stay in Portugal with the comfort and support of the family, good food and climate but make less money ... what I need is the possibility to choose because I cannot be forced to leave due to lack of choice"*

Summing up, the posture as an employer should be focused on:

- To institutionalize meritocracy at all levels

- To assume responsibility for an internal forcing to avoid layoffs and unemployment and to fight for investment and this will translate into more employability.

The final intervention in this panel was made by Dr. Rogério Carapuça, Novabase CEO, and it focused on the way the recent social, politic and economic context have been influencing the hiring of higher education graduates and in specific, engineering graduates. What changed in the last 10 years:

- Low Visibility
- Market Instability
- Cost is always an important factor
- Significant increase in the offer of engineering graduates
- Innovation is an important driver for change

This new reality is reflected in an evolution of the requisites for obtaining a job, namely in the focus given to personal traits over technical skills. A Strong set of Technical Skills is a minimum requirement, not a differentiator, the attitude is the main differentiator therefore it becomes more expendable eventual hiring mistakes because the cost of opportunity of hiring the wrong persons is very high because you cannot easily change personal values and characteristics, while technical skills, with the proper support knowledge, can be learnt. The following table sums up Dr. Rogério Carapuça's analysis on the recent evolution of the labor market:

	Before	Now
Mobility	You would stay in your home town. Stability was a value.	Need for frequent travel abroad and even relocation on a permanent basis.
Change	Your career could be developed in the same technical area; Focus on specialization.	Your career will encompass several technological areas and businesses. Need for the capacity to adapt and learn fast.
Skills	Technical skills were the best "presentation card" for every engineering graduate;	Attitude, initiative, communication skills, problem solving capabilities and orientation towards objectives are valued at (at least) the same level as technical skills.
Creativity	Consolidated knowhow in a given subject was primarily valued;	Consolidated knowhow is only a basis for solving new problems in new contexts;

The focus being on the soft skills, it is important to point out what kinds of the traits and characteristics are considered important. In the perspective of Novabase, the Personal characteristics that matter are the following:

Interpersonal skills;

- dealing with people, not only with technology
- the capacity to work in a team
- negotiation

- communication and language skills

Problem solving capabilities;

- critical thought
- capacity for emphasizing with someone's problems
- information retrieval and classification
- application of knowledge to solve practical problems
- capacity to innovate
- flexibility

Ethics and professional conscience;

- basics on company structure, values and behavior
- professional ethics and organization behavior

To reinforce the position demonstrated throughout its intervention, Dr. Rogério Carapuça summed up with the following:

"This reasoning and the statistics of major Portuguese employer (Novabase) show that relational, communication and motivational skills and abilities are of paramount importance in the hiring process of engineering graduates. Technical skills are no longer enough and are widely available. It is the attitude and the relational skills that make the difference. Universities have a clear role in the motivation and the active training of students in such skills not only through the offering of specific courses but mainly through the values they inspire and through the example passed on to the students by their teachers."

2ND DAY PANELS: ROUND TABLES

1st Topic – Managing employability at HEI



The issue of employability has gaining ground and weight in the way Universities manage and plan their activity, both in terms of supply and in terms of the level of business links and research. Unemployment among college-educated workers, the imbalances between programme supply and the areas lacking qualified workers build a scenario where Universities must equate this issue as one of their major strategic mainstays. The work carried out under WP1 identified not only the presence of exclusive structures that operate with professional integration, in terms of the promotion and/or monitoring, already evidencing an organizational concern in addressing the challenges. The first round table carried out in light of the discussions of the conference exactly aimed at searching and understanding the concerns and the challenges posed by the Higher Education Institutions and mainly finding out how to manage the pertinence and importance of this variable in conducting and planning an HEI.

The approach began by picking up on the issue of employability as a major variable in university management. The first idea is that employability is not a variable shaping higher education supply and, in this regard, the pedagogical supply must not be restricted for imbalances in the labour market. Higher Education is *"driven by social supply by the students. We can say that supply carried out by students is biased because they do not look for what gives them job opportunities and so this gives rise to imbalances between supply and needs"* (Pedro Lourtie). One of the reference issues that has gained ground at the beginning of the conference and, in a certain way, has been on the agenda because of the increase in unemployment in most of European countries (see Background information) was the University's enhanced responsibility in redressing that imbalance through constraints and restrictions to certain fields of knowledge in order to channel the

production of new generations of graduates to fill the gap of human resources existing in certain areas. The unanimous position adopted by the round table, despite the real balance problems, is that the universities should not give in too much or be dependent on the restrictions of the labour market. What is necessary is the existence of tools that allow all those aspiring to higher education be unbiased in relation to the labour market. This idea was theorized by the participants in the Concept of "Informed Choices"⁷. This concept relies on the idea that living in an open knowledge-based society, the choice must be made by the candidate to higher education and the possibility of having access to any field of knowledge. The internationalization factor also plays a relevant role in that the restrictions at national level may be overcome by entering university in other countries.

The round table clearly rejected a *strictu sensu* adequacy of academic supply to the requirements of the labour market. The pressure of an adequacy unusually wedged to the potential needs of the labor market, which is itself extraordinarily homogeneous, is not feasible when we are speaking about the employers' individual requirements based on their particular characteristics.



The main issue deals with the traditional mission of universities to keep knowledge alive and not to let certain scientific areas die, which may in virtue of the technological innovation, be decisive for the development of societies. The underlying idea is that by conditioning the educational offer for merely structural or short-term reasons, there may be serious implications on the knowledge-based society, including on the opening and free choice that characterizes modern societies. In this regard, Professor Eduardo Pereira said: "if a student is aware that the employability of a programme in Humanities, Philosophy or History is low but if he or she wants to pursue his or her studies in those areas and could be a person that will carry out a good work in those areas, just

⁷ The concept "Informed Choices" was described by Professor Pedro Lourtie of IST

because there are structurally higher unemployment rates, why should we create administrative barriers to the choice of that student? On one hand, the students' choice must be respected and informed, but, on the other hand, the university must ensure that there are not dying areas for short-term or immediacy reasons."

The idea that the concept of "Informed Choices" may contribute to a regulation and balance of the education offer and human resource needs relies on the quality of the means of measurement and production of the quantitative and qualitative indicators for measuring career pathways that may form the basis for the candidates and respective families to make that choice. It is necessary to implement, keep and improve the search for more accurate statistics indicators. Objectively, is necessary a rapid action to harmonize data collection techniques and ensure that different sources do not result in differential diagnosis. In the Portuguese case there are two public sources using different methodologies and whose contradictions shadows the debate and strategic actions of public policies. The National Statistics Institute and the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training using different measures and can be used as weapons of political debate according to the guidelines and requirements of government and opposition. This does not serve the national interests. In extreme it's the Italian case, presents a good proposal for standardization through the structure "Almalaurea" that produces statistical information about the performances of Italian universities employability in a methodologically comparable and equitable⁸. This model has already been tested in Portugal in the late 90's through the Centre of Graduates of Higher Education which aimed to assess not only the immediate insertion in the labor market, but also how it was developing a career, making a case for it collection of information to graduates after 5 and 10 years of professional experience. The aim was to provide feedback to HEIs to perceive how their graduates were entering the labor market and provide information to applicants in order to realize the opportunities which were at that time. The model was not followed and the data on employability are currently provided by each institution imposed by a legal framework that obliges to provide employability data of their courses of study.

It also expressed a concern with the evidence of rupture between public opinion and Higher Education Institution. The increasing graduate unemployment rates in countries such as Spain or Portugal and the low salary level of graduates raise doubts about whether it will be worth the investment in higher education, a situation that may exacerbate the difficulties encountered in relation to economic growth through the medium/long term for a shortage of skilled human resources. This deficit is already a concern in some areas, particularly technological and scientific where it is estimated that in the short term some countries, like Sweden or Finland, will have shortage of engineers. Migration of skilled technicians from the south to central/northern Europe, warn of an overall imbalance in the European labor market. Policies to fight and correct should include locations supported by a common European strategy.

This context raised the debate about the social value of higher education in terms of positioning according to the labor market and about the need to demonstrate that value through statistical data, comparing the unemployed with and without higher education degrees. In the Portuguese case, as demonstrated by Professor Victor Escária, the differential between unemployed with and without higher education is significant and with a favorable who holds a university degree. This question refers to the public perception of the value of higher education with unanimous emphasis in the roundtable that is necessary to pass the message of value and competitive advantage that is

⁸ More information about Almalaurea is available on the WP1 Report

to have a higher education level in the labor market, not only in internal market but also in internationalization. In the case of Belgium there is recognition of the social value of higher education both through increasing annual enrollment in higher education and the gradual shift in focus over the last decade by employers who now focuses on higher education graduates.

The economic environment and misuse of statistical indicators (or part of them) in the media may contribute to a removal of potential candidates of higher education when indicators show that this is indeed an asset (differential Unemployed with training VS without training). In terms of interventional measures, is necessary, especially in economies with problems and with the worst indicators in terms of unemployment rates, to implement actions of awareness and demonstration of social and economic value of vocational higher education, both at the individual level and contribution to the development of the knowledge society.

From a more cyclical to a more objective analysis on employability on the problems associated with the approach to the labor market was present at the debate. Was discussed the relationship of the job market approach preparation, or lack of, with employability. What is the real impact of not knowing how to prepare a CV, unaware of the structure and content of an employment contract, unaware of the rights and obligations under their respective legal frameworks labor, among others.

The lack of arguments due to lack of a reality that could lead to a newly graduated accepts poor remuneration or who simply cannot face the normal process of application? If so, here HEIs have a focus, objectives and direct action to work. This is an issue that should be taken into account in the analysis of this problem: What are the real consequences of the lack of preparation and extracurricular aspects of approach to employability in the labor market (both at the macro level of rates and numbers, such as the level of "employability characteristics")

How can universities manage training in skills that are developed and refined in the workplace? The role of universities in preparing extracurricular skills may be limited because they require the experience and context of the labor market to develop. In an analysis of the skills required by employers in job advertisements (performed within the project ATTRACT) in Portugal, it was concluded that the demand for soft skills was more prevalent and significant than technical skills. This raises the question whether the labor market may be demanding skills whose development is actually their competence? The debate followed towards mixed training responsibilities of these skills, and, according to Professor Natalia Alves also assigns responsibility to the universities on this issue: *"learn these skills if they are included in the pedagogical processes carried out among teachers and students"* including placing doubt on the validity of workshops that deep skills are inherent characteristics that can only be exercised through the educational process. According to this perspective Workshops are seen as an ad hoc solution and structural feature whose impact may not be significant.

Concerns about employability at the university should not constrain the point of training only to obtain immediate employment and aim to direct employment outside the university. The characteristics of employability should be structured based on the technical skills, the way of life that endows a person with certain intrinsic characteristics and the first professional insertion. In this sense the idea was discussed the importance of first insertion whose endowment in terms of skills and extra-curricular work tools "non-academic" is decisive and not suitable as a choice, may condition future employment and work of graduates. It appears that the idea that the powers "soft" academic and extra tools may vary from company to company and from sector to sector and this is

an idea that reinforces and puts the onus of skills development also in the professional insertion, not forgetting of course the role of the university, but without all the responsibility. "Mixed Training Responsibility"



It's interesting that future discussions include an analysis of the role of student associations in creating structures and mechanisms supporting employability, including training facilities and preparation, complement to the academia and labor market knowledge. Often it turns out that, given the immediate need felt, are the students who take the initiative to create them, only later the machine heavier than the university is able to emulate and/or absorb a similar function. The vision of the students in this roundtable has showed precisely this idea and presented several structures to support student employability on several fronts, from informative to formative. The representative of the Alumni Association of IST presented some of its own initiatives AEIST, Job Bank, which consists of a platform approach to student job vacancies and availability of these soft skills workshops and an Office of Promotion and Support of Entrepreneurship. The board was unanimous in considering the essential inclusion of students in debate and initiatives because they have a different contact with the issue of employability, a position of the "other side".

A general reflection on the role of the university in the current environment and on how university should regard employability, is that there is a clear responsibility in this regard but ultimately the resolution of the current economic crisis will not be resolved from universities, if the economy does not develop and grow there always be imbalances in terms of the labor market and hence the convergence between supply and demand will not be met. According to Professor Peter Lourtie: *"the context of the crisis means that unorthodox and relief solutions are taken, I think it is important to realize and the message I wanted to make was that we need to listen to our young people and realize their insecurities, difficulties and enable the viewpoint of skills, the ability to be*

an entrepreneur, to find your own work, bring them to know the value of work, bringing such people who are able to show how it works in the world of work, but give them the confidence to be able to face the world of work and give them better tools to face the world of work, and simultaneously convince them that despite everything, having a degree is always better in the view of potential work”.



Following the previous line, Professor Eduardo Pereira concluded with the following idea: *"the university will fail if thinks their aim is immediate and direct employment and training for direct employment at the output of the university, we must train for a long-term, the university will always have to keep training throughout life but there are things you learn at a certain age that cannot be learned in other ages, and then the university must no want to train people who have immediate job, sacrificing the future of these people. "*

2nd TOPIC – Through the Eyes of the employers – “Soft skills / Recruitment / Training / Internationalization”



The approach between the HEIs and the labor market has been present on the European agenda on innovation, economic growth and employment. This presence is evident in the concern that led to *"guide the modernization of education and training in Europe in order to increase the quantity, quality and relevance of skills providing better economy and society"* in which at higher education level there are specific concerns, that include increasing the number of graduates, improve teaching quality and maximize the contribution of higher education to a stronger European economy capable of overcome the current economic crisis.

The second roundtable primarily focused on the vision of employers on employability of graduates (both the concept of rate/number as the characteristics of/ability to obtain employment). on the relationship between Universities and Employers, a plain view is sufficient to state the problem: The universities produce and transmit knowledge/skilled workers and employers/companies absorb this flow and channel it to their area of action, that ideally result in production of goods or services and consequent generation of wealth. The relationship becomes complex when considering the implications for the stakeholders, their motivations, objectives and goals. The university is a fundamental structure in the progress of scientific knowledge, development of a critical and reflective thinking, and despite concerns in financing that brings closer a more entrepreneurial mind, is not profit oriented. Subjects such as scientific autonomy and the transmission of knowledge were key issues raised during the conference by speakers from Institutions of Higher Education.

The relationship with employers becomes daedal when the business/market logic present in employers has specific needs that may not be compatible with the aforementioned fundamental

role of universities in the knowledge society. The business needs on market competition, are real focused on their respective realities and targeted to objective ideas in terms of recruitment. The absence of a measurement unit or regulation structure of this supply/demand dialectic will dig the gap between both, generating unemployment in the labor market needs unmet. It's central therefore, to both economic activity and knowledge society, to monitor and match employment supply needs. A harmonious adaptation requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including professional orders and union trades, public entities, student associations, as well as Universities and Companies.

This regulation becomes even more complex when we consider the unpredictable and unbalanced functioning of the markets where we can have overproducing or lack of certain goods and services in very short periods of time, making the markets self-regulation capacity very complex and consequently the regulation of the response capacity of the universities in terms of human resources (Bok 2003)

The objective needs and concerns manifested by the employers are, as expected, more practical and associated with a corporate focus over lapsing the needs and concerns manifested in the previous round table (Managing Employability at HEI). A good start for a more conceptualizing and abstract reflection consists in have a strong insight of the specific concerns that employers have and within this issue, the soft skills debate once again had a high profiled presence.

One of the more highlighted debate themes over the conference, the Soft vs. Hard Skills debate gained a more significant proportion within the concerns of the employers. The raising of this issue itself within the discussion of management and organizing the courses curricular plans results of the constant concern demonstrated by employers. The moderation of the round table solicited information about the recruitment processes and the soft skills were approached as the differentiator element in terms of choosing the right candidate. While not being despised and still being important, the technical skills are an acquired fact supported by the academic degree obtained and also as something companies can boost through training in working context. The concern with the soft skills denotes a bigger concern with the interpersonal relations and with the contribution of the intrinsic characteristics of the individual for the development of its function and the company. The technical know-how is no longer the biggest concern, depending on the reputation of the Higher Education Institution, the employer has guarantees of the technical skills of the candidate and shifts focus to the attributes that potentiate the capacity to interact effectively and in a harmonious way with other individuals, capacity that is an important contribution the individual has for the success of an organization.

The interventions about recruitment demonstrated these concerns. Tekmik CEO, Dr. João Barata expressed the following vision:

"We attribute even more importance to the so called soft skills of the individual in terms of professional path and in that he sees himself doing next. Responsibility and autonomy are some of the things that we value the most and it's perhaps one of the main critiques I point out. What I see in recent graduates is that the time variable is not very important to them (...) the people sense of responsibility is very valuable to us and one of the things we consider more important"

In the same sense, Hovionne CEO, Dr. Peter Villax, manifested similar concerns:

"... I am interested in a person who knocks me out of my chair or the potential to knock me out of my chair in a couple of years. I want someone out of the box, someone who surprises me, thrills me and that has ideas and plans



Another major topic was the connection between universities and employers, partially because it has links to the soft skills issue in terms of where is the responsibility of each in the training and fostering of those skills. Some experiences concerning partnerships between companies and universities were mentioned, such as professional internships, protocols, etc. These were mentioned as a good tool to approach recent graduates in terms of first job. In some cases those experiences may result in effective job for the graduate: *"I always seek to hire engineers who already were there in internships ... it is a test to his capacity to work there and it minimizes the risk of hiring"* (António Vidigal, CEO EDP Inovação). The risk of hiring the wrong person was an issue raised in other sections of the conference and it can relate to the issues of overprotecting jobs acting as a barrier to hiring people. Being the companies oriented for profit, the recruitment of the right human resources needs to have a special concern with who they hire in order to guarantee that they don't create entropy in the company activity. On the other side it is up to the universities to seek the means to potentiate and increase the levels of employability of their cohorts, as demonstrated by the conclusions of WP1 in which one can verify the strong presence of structures oriented for the link. One of the ideas manifested pro-convergence was of the symbiosis between companies and universities in a way that allows Universities to transmit what indeed is necessary to know to perform a job in the most effective and efficient manner in the companies. This can be made through internships, which might be an initiation to professional life but it is by definition also a process of learning which allows the intern to complement his academic training with labor context training. Following this idea, it was also mentioned the idea of having a mixed teaching

staff with external professors from companies in order to provide in university context, what actually is done outside and in professional context.

Another theme raised refers to the graduates and their availability and capacity to have a broad action radius in terms of professional career. The current configuration of labor market and the current political, economic and social conjuncture prevents that there exists a balance between the formative offer and the human resources deficit in some areas (e.g. Architecture is an area struggling with the labor market in every country of the members of the FOLLOW project consortium). It was raised the issue that graduates should have more availability and flexibility to enlarge their professional horizons and accepting and being able to perform outside their academic training.

Following the issue of the unbalanced labor market and the broader action radius of the professional career of graduates, the theme of internationalization and the impact of a global world were also raised. The position of employers towards this issue is quite positive and the idea of seeking opportunities in the global labor market is seen with good eyes. There is not a concern with the so called "Escape of Brains" or a lost public investment in highly qualified work force, on the contrary, the internationalization of these professionals can foster the business relations and investments because the companies operate with identities and work processes that are not nationally centered but are global and wide. Summing up, the idea is that the internationalization of qualified human resources increases the possibilities to potentiate investment in the sense that decisions are made based on visions and detailed insight of the global reality, for instance, a Spanish top manager working in Germany can be a voice and ambassador of his country in order to captivate foreign investment.



There was still time to debate the role of the society of knowledge in the development of the economy and what the impact on graduate employability is. The premise was that all economies

based on knowledge need a high level of training and if there is not guarantee of equal access to this training by all social strata, there will be an exacerbation of social inequalities and asymmetries. It was well present the idea that not only there should be a balance between formative offer and the needs of the labor market, but also a balance concerning the access to formative opportunities allowing all individuals the capacity to compete in a fair way in the current economies.



To conclude, the vision employers have of graduate employability phenomena is supported in the specific needs they have and demand in order to satisfy the human resources needs their companies have and also in a conjectural and structural analysis of the political, social and economic current situation where there a double responsibility in two fronts. The first responsibility is within the graduates who must have a capacity to attain employability skills and flexibility in approaching the labor market, only this way they can be competitive within the labor market. On another front, the main idea is that all measures to potentiate the growth of employability must be accompanied by measures to make the economy grow, which is the only possibility to create more jobs, being the large companies, as larger employers, given an important role as long as they are solicited by public entities in order to establish protocols and strategic partnerships.

3rd Topic – The role of the publicly owned and non-corporate institutions



Moderation started the discussion approaching the discussion of structural unemployment and also the role that technological innovation cycles can have in this phenomenon.

Considering the political and economic environment, panel moderation focused on the issue of employment policies in times of crisis combining with discussion already taken on the conference. This topic can be seen in several ways. In a more focused, looking at employment public policies and vocational training or in a broader level considering employability connections to other issues such as economic and fiscal policies, research, investment, etc.. It is important to retain that analysis of employment cannot be one-dimensional and must always be framed to the current situation, being the essential option to find the right path in terms of strategic planning and action. A comprehensive view should include considerations on economic, demographic and global variables. We are living a age of complexity, conjectural analyzes that don't comprise the structural environment in which we live will not find the correct path.

A starting point for this analysis, which was highlighted in the debate, is the identification of a characteristic of the recent developments of the economies, the shortening of cycles of investment related to technological innovations. Among investment, profitability and replacement this situation leads to disruptions in economic activity, with repercussions on employment level of occupations in decline, professions upswing in its expression in society, changing significantly and increasingly in shorter periods the constitution of the labor market. These dimensions, economic and technological, regardless of its prevalence, should not be the only ones to be included in the equation. Demographics was also mentioned as an outstanding dimension, especially considering Portuguese society in and in particular English and Western societies in general, that are in an accelerated rate of aging, with a shortage at birth with multiple implications at the level of decrease

skilled human resources, and with implications on the configuration of the labor market in terms of new business opportunities and market sectors, that may arise at the expense of other sector emptying. Take the example of geriatrics and biomedicine as growth areas facing childhood education and training whose market shrinks.

These examples and warnings for the combination of economic, technological and demographic dimension is a display of the public authorities multi-analytical vision (other stakeholders as well) that is needed to get effective measures of economic growth and thus create conditions for improving employment rates.

This vision must always be border free in trade and competitiveness. Therefore there is not a local competition, ultimately Portuguese, Belgian, Spanish, Italian, etc., companies are competing on a global scale, with implications for competition for variable costs. This is a highly complex issue, since some sets of parameters are not likely to compete with Asian countries, which have to do with conditions and standards of living in Western societies and that are a deeply unequal competition for businesses. With globalization comes the business delocalization to reduce costs, marketing, design, bets on specific ways to be in the market to defend ourselves against this type of competition. The footwear sector is Portuguese example, because it was known to be low-level and technological intensity and exported to Russia in the 80s with little qualification requirements at the very design, based on the system of subcontracting, experienced a profound shock in the 90s and modernized, introduced the design, marketing, introduced own brands that are the second most expensive in the global market. This may be the way that other industries can also go to ensure competitiveness in the global market.

Employment is associated with these matters and naturally flows into many problems that arise here. Naturally, the public policies for employment and training aim to reduce the impacts of the situations mentioned above. The Portuguese public service employment and vocational training - Institute for Employment and Professional Training - develops a set of measures and instruments, as apprenticeships in order to facilitate the integration into working life of those who end their qualification processes or training; develop other incentives for businesses to create jobs like giving incentives to companies to employ unemployed due to certain structural or permanent bond, recognizing in those companies something that has a social concern and should be rewarded, also at the level of professional training, interventions are developed is the level of initial training for young people adding the needs of the education system itself, also active in training, towards upgrading skills and contributing to the competitiveness and productivity of enterprises, adult education, which can ultimately improve not only the competitiveness of young graduates in the labor market, but also to create better conditions for the needed workforce to sustain a strong economy supported on innovation and knowledge.

The role of higher education and the matching of the skilled labor force to the actual structure of the labor market are mandatory conditions to overcome the issues of structural unemployment, but what is the role of the university in such context? Professor Eduardo Pereira has intervened at this level, and initiated through a contextualization/explanation for the current situation. The ideal that emerged in post-war about a society of full employment based on technological development that would provide a lifestyle freer and less work oriented eventually did not materialize and now are Western societies (Europe and United States) to face serious economic and structural problems at the level of the value of work. It was thought that the level of knowledge development in these societies could ensure the production of ideas and knowledge while in other less developed

societies, in terms of knowledge, production would focus on implementing tasks, taking to a loss of know-how at the level of production means leading to an inability to conceive. The growth and production of jobs have to maintain not only conception industries but also the production industries. This context can provide guidance to governing bodies on their action that can pass not only from adaptability to the rules of the game but also scope to change the rules of the game in their favor. The structuring of a productive market based on conception industry has consequences for the design of the training offer. In the Portuguese case, there was a very large focus on knowledge in the conception and theoretical production that allowed losing an intermediate sector of production in implementation, support and maintenance, whose responsibility is also in universities. Structurally this is dangerous for the placement of graduates in the labor market as it is producing the same kind of professionals, creating a sizeable mass of qualified human resources but at the same time very homogeneous. In addition to this result, there are also problems in governance and management of public money, governs are investing in something whose labor market is unable to absorb and give feedback. The approach of the University placement of graduates in the labor market and recovery of employment, launched the idea that the burden should not be on the side of universities, it is not the university role to create jobs, but train people who the productive structures of the country can absorb. Therefore the university should not have responsibility in this matter but public institutions and business. Universities provide people for employers, that creating employment and together with public policies and actions help creating economic growth and productive activities so that resources produced by universities can contribute to the development of their country. The role of the university is to be producing resources to help development. In short we can say that university is not responsible for job creation. This idea was supported by the Portuguese case where there is a wide acceptance of higher education graduates in the European market, and as such, the main cause of imbalances was pushed into the labor market, the policies and strategies for economic growth and employment generation.



Concerning the issue of the responsibility and role of the university in improving employability, Dr. Octavio Oliveira stated:

"Universities must have a great connection to businesses, it is important that the curricula of all educational institutions, including the Institute for Employment, be constantly updated, the perspective I have is also that institutions should not rely solely on the knowledge skills but also to know how to be, increasingly important skills for achieving employability in the job market. There are social and transversal skills that everyone should be aware. And finally say, my conception in relation to the university system, with the dichotomy university/polytechnic that I absolutely agree, Portuguese society separated from economic activity in this field, but my vision is not that the system must be exclusively market-oriented and to work, it must also have the university system connected to the research, raising the frontiers of knowledge, and therefore there are other plans and objectives beyond the labor market. Lately put up a strong emphasis on employability by their absence, but I think it should not be neglected other concerns. As the role of the Arts, we tend to say that face unemployment that exists in the social sciences should be rethought investment that is made in these areas, but this perspective must be to adequate resources, and not finishing them, Mastering the Arts, Music, artistic expression is fundamental to a company and a university system, even adapting their resources to such Social Utility must continue to have answers to these areas."

Summing up the debate, Professor Eduardo Pereira reflected the following way:

"The university should not look at employability as a first job, but as a person's ability to win the first jobs, keep jobs, creating jobs, providing skills for our students to take initiative, not forgetting also things that are considered within incidental and somewhat unimportant (Theoretical Physics) a few years later take huge steps and are fundamental to high technology mobile phones or for the diagnosis elements and X-Ray, or whatever, so we cannot be focused on the immediate people leave here with 23 years, will have a very long career and we should give them some training that can only get at this age and not in another age and allow them to return to school to be upgraded, but have capacity to respond to new problems that will appear over 50 years of career, not only to the problems we are having at the moment, hence the social utility has to be not only generate immediate value but ensure that in the future will generate value, they can keep knowledge often not considered important but gains relevance with time gain. Regarding the relationship with the professional orders, my greatest experience is not from the Engineers Order side but on the side of the University. The EO had a great virtue that was starting to make evaluations and accreditation of courses long before the public institutions, they were overlooking this matter and had a role on the side of the university I report very positive that helped us in the development of our curricula, and the criticism from outside is not always to be respected strictly but they are great source of information to be taken into account and improve our quality assurance systems. Unfortunately and agreeing with the Economists Order, the presence in the structures of Higher Education Accreditation eventually was reduced to an little intervening and advisory role. It is important that both the orders, such as business associations, like the rest of civil society have points where they can interact and define ideas for the university to absorb and improve their training".

MANAGEMENT & STRATEGIES | PRACTICES IN PROMOTING & MONITORING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY



This panel was dedicated to the partners of the FOLLOW Project and divided in to categories, mainly presenting the results of the first work package of the project and discussing the best practices identified in each partner country or school.

There is an overall solicitude to the effective management of the relations between the companies and the schools; this is translated in several forms, some with great involvement of the governmental entities, others much direct and objective.

The partners presented a set of practices taken place on their institutions that orbit around the monitoring and data systematization, professional counseling and training and finally labor market and company relation.

In the first case, monitoring and systematization of information, IST and KUL presented their practices and key indicators. In the case of IST the analysis of employment in graduates goes as far as 1998 when the first survey was applied, and had a positive evolution until nowadays, where the survey is applied to recent graduates and graduates with 5 years in labor market.

The methodological aspects worth overlook are, regarding target population: sampling frame, representativeness, response rate and sub-population analysis; regarding key indicators: waiting

time for 1st job, contract, and way to get the job, income and internationalization; and finally regarding information collection: primary/secondary date and the Nature of information gathering.

In the following picture we can observe the latitude of the target population of the surveys applied in IST, as well as some notes on the difficulties encountered.

4.1. TARGET POPULATION (2011-2012)					
EMPLOYABILITY			SAMPLING FRAME/ POPULATION	RESPONSE RATE	NOTES
	1st CYCLE	GRADUATES (not continue to 2nd cycle at IST)	83	37%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small sampling frame Course representativeness compromised
	2nd CYCLE	FINAL YEAR STUDENTS	1506	49%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated sampling frame (local/current population) High response rate (without additional pressing)
		1 YEAR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	697	48%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong institutional commitment Improved response rates Good course representativeness
		5 YEARS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	883	34%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdated contacts use Less linkage to the institution Hard to obtain good response rates
		10 YEARS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	In development	In development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete sampling frame (URN)
		EMPLOYERS	170	48% (URN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of commitment from Employers Indirect access to survey (Survey filled by a 3rd person)
	3rd CYCLE	GRADUATES	290	48%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population with different characteristics – Analytical focus on the course impact

The evolution of the key indicators is notorious, from 1998 to 2011, variable such as internationalization, number of job offers or a more comprehensive look at the income variable, was introduced during the process that now includes the following key indicators: Waiting time for first job, contract, way to get job, position, non-variable income, variable income., incentives, job offers and internationalization.

The surveys are flexible and adaptable to the different populations were the Recent Graduates surveys have a different approach and indicator than the 5 years professional experience survey.

The outputs from these surveys are presented in many different forms and used to build all types of materials and reports that help decision making for candidates course selection and managing structures of IST, like helping to curricular adjust or media reply with substantial data background.

In KUL the alumni career research focus on some key variables related to employment and working conditions, mainly the employment status, sector, income and working hours. Other variables are also monitored like the start and duration of job search, main reasons for recruitment and usefulness of degree.

Some figures on the participation in the Alumni Career Research can be stated in the following picture:

	Academic year	Population	Number of participants	Response rate
KU Leuven	2008-2009	3,261	1,337	41%
Faculty of Engineering	2008-2009	214	104	48,6%

The outputs of these surveys are organized by indicator and complemented with other alternative research, like the IE-net survey, that monitors the sector of employment.

For the future the KUL Engineering Faculty focus on increasing the offer of internships available for students, increase managerial and leadership as well as entrepreneurial skills of students and increase contact and interaction with employers.



According to the second topic, professional counseling and training, UPC, POLITO, KUL and IST presented some practices, in this case UPC describes its UPC Alumni service. A service offered by UPC to its graduates with the main goal of enhancing the belonging to UPC and to develop professional and personal relationships.

This goals can be specified in the following specific objectives: To facilitate the exchange, knowledge and experience of members of the UPC; Provide community services related to training, career guidance and employment, entrepreneurship, sport, leisure and culture; Facilitate interaction between members through clubs, chapters, promotion meetings and social networking and Gather and visualize all at UPC existing alumni associations.

There are three types of UPC alumni members, UPC Alumni (graduates) UPC Alumni Premium (UPC Alumni that pay a fee to have access more specialized activities and services) and UPC Alumni Protectors (entities that support activities of UPC alumni paying a fee).

UPC Alumni also offers a Career Service, that include career counseling with individual support on decision taking, skill and competencies development workshops, conferences and discussions on career opportunities, professional mobility and mobility. This service also organizes visits to companies to find and identify new areas, new profiles and new working environments.

The Job Vacancies managed are exclusively for junior and seniors. The service provides assistance and support for companies regarding recruitment of people with technical profiles, information on international mobility programs and recruitment for national and international companies. The first edition of a Virtual Occupational Fair also takes place.

Entrepreneurship is also fostered by the Research Valorization Unit of UPC, with compulsory courses and entrepreneurship fostering.

POLITO Career Counseling Service has the main goal of "professional guidance of the individual by utilizing psychological methods especially in collecting case history data, using various techniques of the personal interview, and testing interests and aptitudes". Was born in 2011 and since then has carried individual meetings taken by work and organization psychologists.

This counseling consist of four central aspects, Helping individuals to gain greater self-awareness in areas such as interests, values, abilities, and personality style; connecting students to resources so that they can become more knowledgeable about jobs and occupations; engaging students in the decision-making process in order that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their own interests, values, abilities and personality style and assisting individuals to be active managers of their career paths as well as becoming lifelong learners in the sense of professional development over the lifespan.

In this counseling meetings there are the definition of the career path; identification of skills, abilities and strengths; identification of aspirations, values and professional interests; definition and consolidation of one or more professional projects; development of the necessary tools for self-presentation (writing a CV and letters of introduction); setting of a structured self-marketing plan; illustration of how to use the different job search tools; planning of these activities and monitoring of the results of the research.

The strengths of this service are the individual approach, that fosters a personal contact and a context-sensitive work, and the weaknesses are related to limited resources and limited beneficiaries. This service can be improved by providing a more structured, complete and continuous in time service.

In POLITO, the Stage&Job Unit works close with the Career Counseling Service and provides the link between the companies and the companies, fostering internships, creating courses that respond to labor market needs and monitoring employment issues.

KUL student association also provides services of professional and career guidance, like career days and workshops.

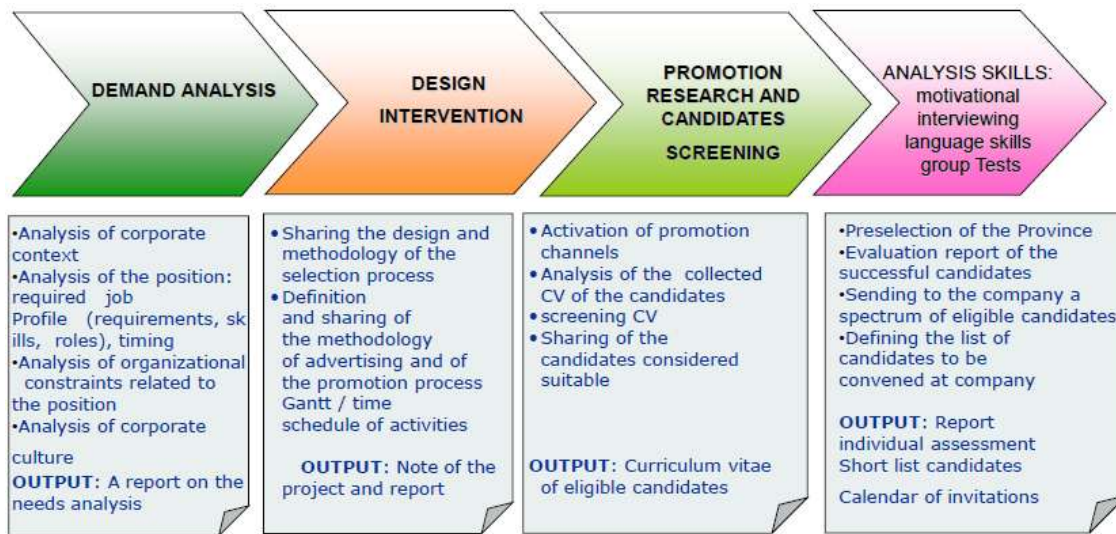
In IST the Transfer and Technology Office manages to help career development and companies relations as well as the intellectual property. The development of a Career development plan that includes some activities like a Career week, training workshops (cv creation, job search strategies, interview methods, negotiation and career management), jobshops and summer internships. IST gives to students scholarships for 2 sessions of career workshops.

Tecnico Career Sessions



In the labor market and company relation, there were several good examples presented in the conference. The region of Torino presented a service that matches the public and private sectors. This service is based on Employment Centers, which collaborate with University of Torino and POLITO, which provide pre-selection of candidates and supply of high profile job skills or specialized profiles to the labor market and companies in a multimodal methodology of selection and recruitment. Some of the advantages of this service is the flexibility and close cooperation between recruitment teams from both companies and Employment Center, customization of the professional integration with corporate methodology and business needs of the company; the definition of a research process and selection of tools analysis ad hoc for the Company, construction of a system of project monitoring; the continuous control and coordination management of the applicant for all the selection process; the reduction of indirect costs of logistics and secretarial; it's a pre-paid service without any extra charge to the Company and helps strengthening cooperation between public and private.

This service is organized in 4 stages:



This service works close with companies and universities and provides to candidates the ability to have direct access to highly skilled employment opportunities without area constraints; timely access to tools to promote research, ability to auto-nominate using different methods, support in understanding the requirements and evaluation of the requirements requested, orientation talk regarding active research, advice and support in the articulation of an effective cv, information on the how to search job opportunities and access to "High professional" database .



Companies can access the service in three modalities, Bronze, Silver or Gold, each one with different types of offering and complexity, and adequate to companies needs and budget constraints.

In this matter all partners described a Job placement service, which goes from virtual occupational fairs or tools to offices that have a concrete relation with companies.

In KUL the student association takes a predominant role in career counseling and labor market relations. The business relations unit organizes several events in collaboration and in demand of companies. Are example of these activities the BR-launch, the stage fair, job fair, job forum and interview days and panel discussions, among others.

We emphasize the BR-Launch event, which combines a social activity with the companies and employment relations.

1. BR-launch: company presentations combined with a specific activity (e.g. golf courses, wine tasting)

- Main purpose: connect students and companies in an informal way
- Main audience: last year students
- Participants: +/- 100 students and 8 companies in 2011
- Response:
 - From students: positive, informal atmosphere in which students feel comfortable asking questions to companies
 - From companies: positive, approach is very much appreciated

UPC relations with companies and the labor market is framed in the looking for new technological solutions, improvement of professional development and facilitating talent to the productive sector. In this case UPC takes some strategic development among students that focus on:

Strategic development of employability among students and graduates of the UPC



The UPC schools also take actions in labor market relations through internships for bachelor and master level students, complemented by job listing in schools, participation and exchange with mobility and internship initiatives (BEST, IAESTE, etc.) and several activities taken by students like business forums.

In UPC the Research Valorization Unit also fosters the collaboration between companies and the university in research and investigation related employment.

Other contributes came from other High Education Schools represented in the Conference. The nature of the practices focuses, in general, on the same concerns. The systematic organization of data that allows schools to take decisions, the improvement and development skills and career counseling and labor market relations, focusing also in the preparation of students for the international labor market.

In general institutions gather company profiles and establish some collaboration habits, contact persons, graduate selection for job interviews, job listings, selecting and interviewing graduates to specific institutional requests.

Directed towards the students the activities are mainly of training and counseling, internships and job fairs/career weeks. In this practices the counseling on how to prepare interviews and preparation of the cv are generally stated.

The Paula Frassinetti School also promotes shared experiences between graduates and former graduates and international employment through direct support to students on applications, partnerships with EURES network and international cooperation projects. In the field of international employment they also foster Entrepreneurship projects, market research, financing possibilities (microcredit, business angels), and active job search. They are also involved in a cooperation project, language based, with Timor Lorosae, introduction to Portuguese Language; teacher's training; support to Timor students.

Besides the general activities stated above, like internship programs, the ISLA school program Employability 360° integrates a group of best practices:



The activities integrated are diverse and goes from specific programs, like the Active job and Senior Program not only focus on recent graduates but also on students already in the labor market or with professional background, to event that bring closer companies to graduates and the university. The objective is to foster entrepreneurial mind and also put the company resources managers in contact with the students.

Some courses are integrated in the academic programmes, like communication skills, professional ethics, creativity and critical thinking, interpersonal relations, management and leadership, image and public relations.

In the field of studying the paths and statistical profiles, the Lisbon University has release since 2000 several studies concerning employability and entrepreneurship. The building of these studies relies on survey implementation, in this particular case at recent graduates (12 and 18 months after graduation).

UL also develops activities to develop skills on employment and entrepreneurship and features workshops, personalized customer service, internationalization programs, specific technical training, promotion of internships and practical experiences and support for the creation of companies.

The strategy of UL also involves professional associations in the process, adding one more partner in the companies – universities relation, gathering professional recognition in the labor market. The professional orders are invited to participate in workshop and sessions.



The  is invited to explain to final-year students

the rules of professional recognition;
the rights and duties of professionals;
clarify doubts and listen to suggestions from
future / new professionals

Annual sessions (70 participants on average) .

On a final note, it is important to mention the practice of a Job Shadowing program by Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP). This practice consists in a program for students to find out what it is like to be in a specific profession. The act of job shadowing is also utilized by college students or by non-student adults simply wanting to experience a particular career opportunity. In either, the shadower will follow the professional and observe their daily work⁹. While not being an exclusive practice, it demonstrates a concern of UCP with providing their students with actual direct

⁹ [Education 2020 Homeschool, Vocabular, Career elective](#)

exposure to what is their potential future. In UCP, this program is organized in way that the top students are the ones to benefit from it. In short the strategies tend to respond to similar needs but to different contexts. In general the economic context and labor market demands is the engine of the need for a closer relation between the stakeholders on employability, fostering a better adjustment of the market needs to the graduate skills.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND FUTURE DEBATES

The 1st International Conference on Graduate Employability did not have the ambition to produce the solutions to the overall employability problems, nor did have the ambition to produce practical results that one can pick up and implement immediately. The purpose of the conference, as the whole FOLLOW project, was to lay foundations for a more structured debate and to act as a very comprehensive and insightful starting point (or restarting point) for all sorts of work made within the employability field. Some topics, due to their stand out presence, deserve a few additional words.

The Society of knowledge

If from the viewpoint that the convergence must be focused on the capacity of the universities to the labor market needs, where is there room for investigation with the purpose of producing knowledge “per se”? The increase of knowledge and the capacity to understand the phenomena that surrounds us may have its applicability and usefulness in the long term, does this mean that there should not be investment for this kind of research?

Competences and being prepared for the labor market

The immediate capacity to perform a job that recent graduates might or might not have was a hot topic raised by universities, public institutions and employers. For future debates one can ask if the convergence between Universities and employers can be supported by a preparation for the performance of jobs through offices and extra-curricular structures but without influencing directly the curricula for conjectural or structural motives.

The attractiveness of Higher Education

The perception potential HE candidates have can influence, in the short term the shortage of HE students in some courses and consequently might, in the mid and long term, have serious implications in the human resources structure of the labor market or even in the extinction of a course, making a Country less developed in terms of scientific knowledge . A potential lack of attractiveness might be present when the labor market conditions don't allow HE graduates to obtain jobs in a fast and satisfactory but there might even be problems in more developed labor markets. The European Project ATTRACT¹⁰ deals with the problem of the shortage of technology, engineering and science work force in countries where the employment market is better balanced than in South European Economies. The development of these countries allows the population not

¹⁰ www.attractproject.org

to be highly conditioned by employability factors and can achieve good employability levels without higher education degrees. In some cases, such as Belgium or Finland there is not a significant difference in the employability of the different education levels.

The role of the students

The students' role and capacity to mobilize and develop their own structures for improvement and support of employability cannot be underestimated. Students are the main target of initiatives such as FOLLOW and the inclusion of their insight and experiences is essential for a complete observation of the graduate employability phenomena. The resource to quantitative indicators such as employment rates or n° of graduates signed up at job centers allows a macro vision of the phenomena but to act solely on this level might lead to investments in measures which are not adequate and whose efficacy and efficiency may be sub-par. We can metaphorically think that if a boat is sinking, the mental disposition of the one who's on the boat will always be different from the ones on shore thinking what they can do to help. In the name of the multiplicity of motivations, experiences and mental dispositions it is relevant to bring to the debate and seeking of solutions the ones that we are ultimately addressing to, the students and graduates.